




*Prism*



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*Jill Crawford*

# *Prism*

*The Literary Magazine of Peace College*

# ***Peace College Prism*** **1993**

*Editor:* Lynn Fullbright

*Art Coordinator:* Kelli Jenkins

*Faculty Advisor:* Dr. Sally Buckner

## *Awards for Poetry:*

Kerri Habben  
Heather Snapp  
Lindsay Mize

## *Awards for Prose:*

Robin Hollamon  
Kerri Habben  
Ashley Prevatte

## *Judges*

Dr. Bes Spangler  
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## *1993 Prism Staff*

Beth Haney	Dana Roach
Robin Hollamon	Stephanie Robertson
Tara Jenkins	Kim Starbuck
Lindsay Mize	Jennifer Thrailkill
Ashley Prevatte	Lauren Wilkenson

## *Contributors*

Jill Crawford	Lindsay Mize
Carolyn Davis	Tina Motley
Laura Davis	Jodi Pearce
Dana Ford	Ashley Prevatte
Starla Gallimore	Becky Schaefer
Hidemi Itoch	Brooke Thompson
Heather Leinenweber	Kari Ward
Michelle Matheney	Alma Young
Lynn May	Suzanne York

*Cover Design:* Kelli Jenkins

*Cover Page:* Jill Crawford, Kelli Jenkins

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## On the Beach

Once we drank orange juice on the beach,  
My tiny hand content between your fingers.  
Your firm stride slowing to my small steps.  
But angry autumn wind drove through us,  
And you wrapped me in your fuzzy brown coat,  
As if I were a baby kangaroo in its pouch.

For a while, we ignored the coldest breeze,  
Laughing as we ran, stopping as you tired;  
Tightening your coat around me,  
We talked on the sand, drinking orange juice  
Even though winter was soon to come.

I cherished the days before fall came,  
When summer sun always played  
And waves tickled our toes —  
Yet all seasons must pass on.

During the whirling winds,  
In your warm and fuzzy coat,  
We huddled from the relentless cold.

Long after the frozen breezes,  
I sat alone in your empty coat,

Tasting orange juice in the sun.

*Kerri Habben*

### **Rendezvous:**

You met me at the base of the stairs,  
Gazing into my shining eyes,  
You led me to crackling logs,  
And we sat, staring at darkening mountains,  
As soft melodies swirled around us,  
You made a steaming nightcap,  
And we talked until the last ember faded.

And then . . .

I climbed the stairs, drifted into slumber,  
Thinking of hot chocolate and adopted grandfathers.

*Kerri Habben*

## Family Matters

Laura Williams had been on her knees in the sandy patch of dirt beside the front steps for a full half hour when her mama's curly brown head peeped around the side of the front door. "Laura Denise Williams, get yourself out of that dirt, and come in this house right now!"

"But Mama, I was just watching the..."

"I said come inside! I need you to help me in the kitchen. Have you seen your dad's truck coming up the road yet?"

"No Ma'am."

"I wonder where they are. They should have been home thirty minutes ago." Mama turned and walked inside, letting the screen door slam behind her. Then she put her face up to the screen. "Come on, Laura. I want you inside right now."

Laura sighed, "I'm coming Mama." Lazily unfolding her long, skinny legs, she stood. She squinted into the July sun as she reached her arms to the sky and arched her back in a long, slow stretch. As her arms drifted down, she glanced at her watch. Now she knew why Mama had called her by her full name. She had been told to hurry back inside to help with supper when she walked out to feed the dogs; that was forty-five minutes ago. Great, Mama would be aggravated about this for quite a while. Well, how was she to know that she would see that one tiny red ant tediously dragging a dead caterpillar toward the big ant hill by the steps? She didn't think she had ever seen anything quite so interesting in all of her thirteen years. She had watched, fascinated, as the ant pulled the caterpillar into the hill and then became so engrossed with the comings and goings of the ants that she'd lost track of time.

Laura turned and took all three steps in one stride. She paused at the door and reached for the green garden hose lying under the shrubs to wash the two gray circles of dirt from her knees and to rinse the bottoms of her feet, but when she realized she would have to step down from the steps to turn on the water, she let her sunburnt arm drop back to her side. Maybe Mama wouldn't notice.

When Laura stepped through the front door, the artificial breeze from the window air conditioner caught her long, straight, chestnut hair and whipped it around her face and neck. She walked through the small, cool living room and into the kitchen. It was much warmer in here where the hot breath from the oven and stove immediately swallowed any cool breeze that crept in. Laura watched as her mother opened the oven and bent down to check something inside. Hot wind, thick with the smell of biscuits, rushed from the



oven and swirled around Laura's bare legs up to the edge of her raveled cut-off jeans. Her face was red from the heat, and she could feel tiny rivulets of sweat trickling down her temples and forehead and snaking down the inside of her arms. She wondered if South American jungles or African deserts got as hot as Mama's kitchen during these burning summer days. Her mind began to wander to the dark undergrowth of an emerald green rain forest, and she imagined lying on her back under the trees and feeling cool rain fall on her face and lips.

The oven door slammed with a bang. Mama turned around and drug a tired forearm across the damp curls plastered to her forehead. "Laura, I called you in here to help me, not to stand there gaping at me. Set the table."

"All right, all right," Laura mumbled under her breath. She walked over to the silverware drawer and began to count out four of each utensil. Laura didn't like much about Daddy selling off most of the farm and taking a job in town, but what she liked least was that now she was always cooped up inside doing house chores. At least last summer she was outside with Billy and Dad, and there was no one looking over her shoulder every minute. Laura's thoughts shifted to the warehouse in town where both Billy and Dad worked six days a week. She could almost see Dad in his white button-down shirt with the sleeves rolled up, mumbling to himself as he checked things off on his clipboard and watched the men unload the trucks. She could see Billy walking back and forth between the trucks and the warehouse with the heavy boxes carefully balanced on his manly six-foot frame. His thick brown hair would be damp and stuck to the nape of his neck the way it always was when he got hot, and his thin white tee shirt would be soaked through with sweat.

Wouldn't it be wonderful to be there on the ramps with them right now, standing in the glinting sun and feeling the tickle of an occasional breeze? She and Billy could shoulder their loads and walk side-by-side into the cool, dark warehouse as they laughed and winked over some brand new joke Billy made up that would never seem quite as funny when they repeated it later. They would work together and help each other as they whistled and sang. An entire day would pass in what seemed like only a few minutes. Then on the way home they would become more serious and begin to talk of what they'd seen on the television news the night before, what Dad had said during breakfast and why Mama didn't seem to like it very much, Billy's plan to save all the money he could so that he could go off to college in a few years, or anything else that seemed important at the time. Yes, if she were working at the warehouse, Laura was

sure that it would be just like this, just like it had been when they worked together on the farm last summer. But it was just as Mama had told her yesterday, "There ain't nobody in that whole town who's going to hire a scrawny thirteen-year-old girl to work unloading trucks along side of grown men and eighteen and nineteen-year-old boys like Billy." She had known there was no need to argue about it; Mama was absolutely right.

"Hurry up, Laura. At that rate it's going to take you thirty minutes to set the table. I declare I ain't never seen anybody spend as much of their time daydreaming and staring at walls as you do." Her mother's voice jerked her from her thoughts and startled her so badly that a spoon slipped from her fingers and clattered noisily on the floor. "It's a good thing that wasn't a plate. Honestly, Laura, can't you try to be a little more careful?"

Laura bent down to pick up the spoon and then started to lay the silverware in their places on the small wooden table. She looked down at her watch: 6:45. She, too, wondered where Dad and Billy were. They were usually home by 6:00. As a matter of fact, she did not remember them ever being this late before. Her mind drifted to what she and Billy would do once he got home. After supper, they would go out for a walk as they always did now that he worked in town and they didn't get to talk during the day. She would tell him about watching the ants and how she had lost track of time and made Mama mad. Billy would laugh and probably tell her about some time when he had done the same thing. He would understand; he always did. He was the only one who hadn't laughed at her on that night last year when she announced that she wanted to be a circus horse trainer when she grew up, and he was the only one who didn't say "Girls don't play pro-baseball" when she decided to start training for the major leagues three months later.

Laura laid down the last fork and then began setting out the stack of plates and napkins her mother had put at one end of the table. She began to whistle, making up the nameless, off-key tune as she folded each of the yellow paper napkins in half. "Please, Laura, my head is killing me." Laura stopped her song in mid-note and sucked in a deep breath. She hoped she would remember to warn Billy to stay out of Mama's way tonight. Mama was even crankier than usual.

As Laura was laying the very last plate in its place, she heard the phone start ringing in the living room. "I'll get it," she called and began to walk toward the phone, knowing full well that Mama, who had gone into the living room to dust, would reach it first. Laura reached the door just as her mother was putting the phone to her ear.

"Hello. Jim, where are you? I thought you and Billy would



be home by now." Suddenly Mama stopped talking. Her eyes widened, and her face lost all its color. The phone's receiver slipped from her hand and landed with a crack on the hardwood floor.

"Why do hospitals always smell like this?" Laura mumbled to herself. She wondered if there was some underground organization of hospital workers that got together and decided that all licensed hospitals must have this special hospital scent. Seriously, couldn't they use some kind of air freshener or something? She had been here since 7:00, and now, at 11:30 she could still smell it, even out here in the waiting room.

She shifted her weight in the chair and continued to peel the cracked green vinyl from the frayed corners of the chair's seat. In the hours since she and her mother had arrived at the hospital, she had read almost every article in each of the magazines on the scratched fake wood table in front of her. Well, at least she had pretended to read them. Now she could not even remember what most of them were about. She had even been so bored that she read the bright red pamphlet entitled "There Is Hope: Salvation Through Jesus Christ." Laura didn't see how anyone could find much hope in it though. The whole purpose of the pamphlet as far as she could tell was to scare people into thinking they weren't ready to die until they'd had a visit with Pastor Rob from the Jericho Deliverance Temple. She had just been reading along, not letting anything in it faze her until she came to the part that said, "None of us know when some dread disease or unexpected accident will call us to the world beyond."

Accident, accident, accident. That word throbbed in her brain like a dull headache, and for the first time since her father called home with the news, she pictured the accident just as Daddy had described it. She could see David Johnson turn too quickly, the box in his hands accidentally knocking Billy from the ramp onto the black asphalt below where the wheels of the already-backing fork lift rolled slowly over his chest and face. Once this picture entered her mind, she could not seem to shake it from her thoughts, and at this very minute, she sat watching her own little slow-motion movie of it in her head. Earlier she had tried to distract herself by watching the others in the waiting room, but, like herself, they did nothing but stare into space or read the year-old magazines. The reception desk offered no entertainment either, unless you had some kind of hopeless obsession with watching people in white uniforms answering phones.

Where were her parents? They had been in the waiting room with her until about an hour ago when a blank-faced doctor had

stepped out of the elevator and asked, "Are you Billy Williams's parents?" When they had nodded their reply, he said, "Come with me, please." Laura had stood up too, until the doctor said something to her father that she didn't quite catch. Daddy had turned to her and said, "Not yet, Laura. Wait here until we come back down to get you." So here she still sat, reading up on salvation and practicing techniques for vinyl removal. If someone would just tell her something, anything. She didn't even know if Billy was alive or dead. What if he were dead and she didn't even get the chance to tell him good-bye? But that wasn't possible, was it? Billy couldn't be dead; he wouldn't do that to her. Oh no, she was crying again. She would have thought that she would be all dried up by now. How could one person hold that much water?

Just then she saw her father walk out of the elevator. Finally. There were dark crescents under his eyes, and she could not remember ever seeing him look so old. She jumped up and was right beside him almost before he took a step. Laura stammered, "Is he, is he..."

"No, honey. He's alive, but he's not doing real good. He's in a coma. Would you like to go see him? You can go see him now if you want." Laura nodded her head and started to cry even harder. As she stepped into the elevator with her dad, she caught a glimpse of her blotchy, red, swollen face in the polished chrome frame around the elevator door.

When they reached the twelfth floor, Laura's dad put his arm around her and led her to Room 1202. The first thing Laura saw when she walked into the room was her mother sitting in a chair on the left side of the bed staring blankly at the opposite wall. Laura could see that she had been crying, but now she sat as expressionless as a department store mannequin. Then Laura turned her eyes to the stark white bed in the center of the room that was surrounded by pumping, gasping machines and tubes. Oh, but this couldn't be Billy. The swollen, misshapen head on that pillow did not even resemble her brother. This was not the grinning young man who had playfully punched her in the shoulder on his way out the door this morning. These puffed, purple eyelids could not possibly hide the warm brown eyes that had smiled at her so many times. Yet the hands lying so still and white on top of that sheet were his, and the chart at the foot of the bed had "Billy Williams" typed at its top.

Laura walked over to the bed and slowly reached out to touch one of those hands--Billy's hands--but cringed and drew her hand away when instead of feeling his soft, warm skin, her fingers came down on a cold, hard tube. She heard footsteps and looked toward the door to see a tall, gray-haired doctor standing beside her father. He looked at each of them in turn and then said quietly, "You might



want to think about saying good-bye."

Laura bolted between her father and the doctor and dashed down the fluorescent hallway until she spotted the big brown door marked "Ladies". She crashed into one of the tiny stalls and sank to the cold tile floor, sobbing.

\* \* \*

Laura rolled over onto her back. The white sunlight streaming through the window brought her to full consciousness, and she suddenly realized that she was much too warm under both the sheet and her thick, lavender comforter. She kicked the covers off and yawned so big she thought it would break her jaws. Then she moaned and rubbed her eyes. Laura lay still and listened for a second. The house was quiet. Mama must have already gone to the hospital. She counted on her fingers. Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday, Sunday, Monday, Tuesday. It had been eight days since Billy's accident. Laura had not been back to the hospital since the second night when Dr. Stuart had told them, "Y'all ought to go home and get some rest. There's nothing you can do. He probably doesn't even know you're here." She could not bear to see her brother in such a condition, and the doctor's suggestion that their being there did Billy no good was the only excuse Laura needed to avoid that cramped, white room and all of the dizzy, nauseous feelings it gave her.

Dad had started going back to work on Tuesday, the fourth day after the accident, going to the hospital after work and staying until about one or two o'clock in the mornings, but Mama left early every morning and came home only once a day around lunch time and then went back until she came home with Daddy in the early morning hours. During the last few days, Laura had been completely avoiding all thoughts of Billy's accident. Somehow she hoped that if she refused to believe it had happened, it wouldn't really be true, and Billy would come walking through the front door at any minute, same as always.

Laura stretched her legs and then swung them over the edge of the bed and stood up. She padded down the hall and into the living room where she snatched the remote control off the top of the coffee table, sank into a big blue armchair in the corner and switched on the T.V. She looked over the half-wall that separated the living room from the kitchen and saw the dirty dishes lying on the table and piled up in the sink. Until this past week, Mama had never allowed anything in the house to be out of place for more than about ten minutes. Laura knew that she should go wash the dishes and put them away, but she just couldn't seem to make herself do it.

When Mama walked in the front door two and a half hours later, Laura was still sitting in the same chair in her nightgown staring at the blaring television. Mama gave her a disgusted look and walked into the kitchen. "Laura, why don't you get up from there and come help me clean up this house," she yelled over the noise from the T.V.

Laura started to rise from the chair, but then fell back into it and pressed the button on the remote control that lowered the volume on the T.V. "I want to finish watching this show," she called to her mother.

She heard the clanking of silverware in the kitchen sink stop abruptly. "Laura, I said get up and help me."

Laura snapped off the T.V., slammed down the remote, and walked slowly into the kitchen. As soon as she stepped onto the linoleum floor, Mama started in on her.

"I don't know why you can't get up off your tail and do something helpful around the house while I'm gone during the day. It's not like you have anything else to do."

"But Mama, I..."

"No but's. You're old enough to know what needs to be done around the house and how to do it. How do you expect me to keep this house looking decent if you won't ever give me any help?"

"I don't know." Laura's sarcasm was evident. "Maybe if you wouldn't spend every waking moment at the hospital, the house wouldn't be in such a mess. It doesn't matter if you're there or not. He doesn't know the difference."

From the second those words came out of Laura's mouth, she was sorry she had said them. Not only was she sorry for what she had said, but she also knew that talking back to Mama always carried a heavy penalty. Laura stood, frozen, as she wondered whether she should run for the door or try to apologize. Mama spun around from the sink and stood glaring at Laura as if she would kill her. Laura braced herself for the deluge of angry words that she knew must come next, but then watched, astonished, as Mama pulled out of the chairs around the table, sank down into it, placed her elbows on her knees and her head in her hands and burst into tears.

Laura charged past her mother, down the hall and into her room and slammed the door behind her. The framed poster on the wall over the head of her bed rattled and then fell on the bed with a dull thud. Laura plopped down onto the cool hardwood floor and leaned against her bed. She could feel the edge of the mattress through the thick comforter against her back as she pressed her clammy palms to her temples. Her head was spinning. "It's not fair. It's not fair. It's not fair." Those three words circled around and



around in her mind.

Without thinking, she rose to her feet and walked over to her closet door. It gave a long, shaky creak as she turned the knob and slowly pulled it open. She steadied herself by placing her left hand on the inside of the door frame as she rose to her tiptoes and stretched her other hand up to the closet's highest shelf. Her fingers closed around the end of a shabby old shoe box. She heard the cardboard scrape against the wooden shelf as she slid the box from its place and down into her hands. Laura looked down into the box at the fifty pictures or so that had been tossed into over the years. Some were more than ten years old; others had been taken just six months ago. She walked back across the room, sat down on the edge of the bed and begun to shuffle through the photographs. Christmas, Billy's graduation, dozens of school pictures. Ah, there it was, the picture Mama had taken the day they first brought Laura home from the hospital. There was the newborn baby lying in her father's arms as the beaming, dark-haired, six-year-old boy bent down to kiss her tiny head. Laura saw the glistening drop fall onto the center of the picture before she even realized that there were tears running down her cheeks.

Laying the photo back in the box, she sat the box on her bed as she stood, walked over to open her bedroom door and stepped into the hall. She went to the kitchen and sat down in the chair across from her mother. Mama was still sitting in the same position with her face buried in her hands. Laura wiped the tears from her cheeks and sat staring at the patch of worn yellow linoleum showing between her bare feet. "I'm sorry," she whispered.

The next morning Laura set her alarm clock for four-thirty, the same time Daddy got up. She fixed toast and eggs for the two of them so they could eat before they left at a quarter to six. They rode to town in silence. After parking in the hospital lot, they both got out of the small red pickup truck and walked inside together. Once Daddy had talked to Dr. Stuart and arranged for Laura to be able to stay in Billy's room until her mother arrived, he kissed her on the cheek and left for work.

Laura rode the elevator to the twelfth floor and walked slowly down the corridor to Billy's room, then paused for a few seconds before walking in. Billy looked much more like himself now that the swelling had gone down and a few of the bruises had faded, but she couldn't help but remember what Dad had told her over breakfast this morning. "No changes in his condition. Dr. Stuart says we can still lose him at any time."

She walked into the room and dragged the chrome and

plastic chair around the foot of the bed up next to Billy's head. Its metal legs scraped across the floor, and the sound echoed in the room and out the open door into the quiet hallway. She turned the chair so that she would be looking at Billy's face and sat down slowly. She reached out to hold his pale left hand in her own.

"Hi, Billy," she said softly, almost whispering. She sat silent for a moment, then bent to kiss his forehead. She felt her eyes begin to water. "We really miss you at home." Gently squeezing his hand, she waited, hoping with all her soul that he would squeeze back.

When he didn't, she dried her eyes and lifted the cool, limp hand to her flushed cheek. She knew she would be back tomorrow.

*Robin Hollamon*



*Alma Young*



## A Gypsy Woman Meets A Voodoo Queen

"We've traveled far, we people of Rome,  
From camp to camp,  
Calling none our home."

"Yea, sistah I understand,  
Us too comes  
From a dif'rent land.  
'Cross the ocean  
In bitin' chains,  
They brung us here to  
Be they slaves.  
But not me, sistah.  
No sir-ee!  
Every slave and massah  
Want my gris-gris.  
With the click of a bead  
Or the swish of my skirt,  
I can inflict pain  
Where it really hurt."

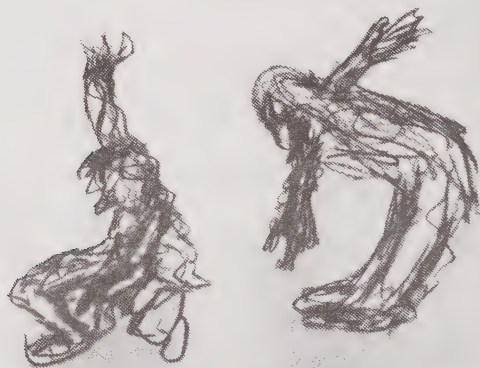
"Your power, my cousin,  
I can plainly see.  
But why cause pain,  
Not pleasure like me?  
They come from all over  
To sit in my wagon,  
To pay me with silver  
And hear what I tell them.  
I tell their fortunes,  
Sometimes good, others bad.  
I search in my crystal  
For the secrets they've had  
Or I'll take their hand,  
And gaze at their palm,  
Look at the lines  
While I Oh'm and Ah'm"

"Your method's good,  
I tell you, my sistah,  
But its no way to control  
A horny young massah.  
I too can make pleasure,  
But only for me.

Every potion I measure  
I don't make for free.  
I'll ask for a favor,  
Or some food from down river.  
Nothin' too hard,  
That folks can't deliver.  
I don't need no silver,  
Or waste-paper money.  
I just need a fence built,  
Or rolls dipped in honey."

"Cousin, your magic's  
For life and security,  
Those things are good  
For you but not for me.  
I need the silver,  
The trinkets and gold,  
Or I will go hungry  
Before I get old.  
I don't need control,  
'Cause I live with my family,  
Before a man wants me,  
I'm in the next county.  
We're cousins, you and I,  
In more ways than one,  
But in magic we differ  
So tomorrow I'm gone."

*Heather Snapp*



*Heather Leinenweber*



## The Last of the Milkshakes

They sat that it is okay if I'm angry, but what good would it do? It wouldn't change anything. That I need to talk about what's coming. And then I can go into a widow's group and express all my feelings. They say I'll suddenly get tired after taking care of my husband. I don't have a psychology major, but I'm not stupid. Of course I'll be tired. I'm already tired. Then there are the people in the church who say I'm too old to be taking care of him, so put him in a nursing home. He's my husband, not theirs, and I want him to live out his last days with me nearby. Everybody thinks they know what I want or what I need. What I need they can't give me, so I don't even want to hear about it. I wish the people who visit would talk to me too. At this point visits are degrading for Harry, I think. They all look at him with pity in their eyes and want me to try to be optimistic. One lady came last week, and she said he was looking better. I was angry. Even if he was looking better, he's still only half alive, and not even really my Harry anymore. His eyes don't show much emotion, he is just a vestige of the man I married. When people tell me to think positive, I think that's their own fears emerging. They know someday we could all end up like that, and mortality scares them. Do they think I'm not scared? Half the people who come to help us, I end up comforting them instead. If there was a chance Harry could get better, I would fight for that with everything in me. But there's not. So I give him the best days I possibly can. It's scary and sad, but it's my life now. I will do what I have to. Harry would want me to live without him, but I don't know how yet.

The guy in the car behind me honks when the light turns green, and I don't move forward right away. I despise the sound of horns so I shoot him a glare in the rear-vision mirror.

"I'm old, but I'm moving. You'd think the world was going to end or something," I mumble to myself and press the accelerator. I glance at the man again as he practically sits on the back of my car.

"Just pass me, why don't you?" I grumble again, and finally he zooms by. I turn into Hardee's parking lot, debating if I want to go through the drive-thru or go inside. I park Chugger in the nearest spot to the door. My husband, Harry, calls our old Ford that, but once she was shiny and new. I push open the door and head for the counter.

"Two milkshakes please," I answer when the sweating girl behind the cash register appears. She punches a few keys, wipes away the moisture from her forehead, and announces wearily.

"That'll be \$2.39." I hand her a five, which she takes mechanically, and then calls to some one in the back.

"Can't you get the air-conditioner to work?" A male voice says something in return, but it's too muffled to make any sense of.

"It's really not so bad outside," I say, hoping to see her smile. She must only be sixteen or seventeen at the most.

She looks up and sort of half grins. "I don't mean to complain, it's just..."

"Hot," I finish for her and the grin widens. "Why I remember when my husband and I first got married. We lived in this humid, dank apartment above his parents' garage, and every day of the summer it was awful up there. We slept with the windows open, but then all the bugs came in."

She smiles again, holding the two cups. "This is for here?"

"No," I correct her, "I'm taking them home to have with my husband."

"He'll like that," she says, and places the milkshakes in one of those cardboard trays. "Here you go,"

"Thank you very much," I answer and head slowly for the door. I don't think Harry will really know what he is drinking anymore. He always liked milkshakes, but I don't know if it will register anymore what he's having. The doctor says it is only a matter of time, but it seems like he's been saying that for a while now.

I'm pushing open the back door at home, as the nurse's aide comes into the kitchen. She's moving along in her quiet, steady way. When she sees me, she smiles.

"Mrs. Weiss, you're back already. You should have taken some time to do something for yourself while I was here. Mr. Harry's sleeping right now, but he ate some of the strained baby food."

"Thanks, Paula," I pat her shoulder as I pass by, heading down the hall to our bedroom. I moved the big double bed out two weeks ago and got a hospital bed. Harry didn't put up much of a fuss, actually he was much calmer than I expected. Maybe he is so tired now that it doesn't matter to him. As sick as he's been the last year, it didn't make much of a difference without our bed. The guest room, actually Julia's old room, is now mine. It feels strange sleeping alone after sleeping next to Harry for forty-seven years, but at least I'm still healthy. When I think of how weak Harry has gotten, I'm sad for him, for us, and I thank God that I'm able to do what I can.

Tiptoeing across the rose carpet, I study his face as he sleeps. I wait a few moments, trying to look past the sunken pale skin and oxygen tube to remember the warm, vibrant man that I married. In my mind I see him, and that memory strengthens me. We've always worked together, now I have to have all the strength for me and him. He looks so still laying there between the bars, sometimes it seems



like he's slipped away. Then he'll suddenly open his eyes and look at me. He doesn't smile really, not that I blame him. He'll look for a while, and then play with the top of his bedsheet. It's actually almost a comical routine. He'll pull the edge as taut as he can, stare intently at how wide the seam is, and then fold it back down as smoothly as he can. Just when I think he is settled, he starts the process all over again. I told Paula he was an insurance agent before he retired, and she suggested that in his mind, he is shuffling through papers.

"He's really asleep now," Paula says coming up behind me. "I had the T.V. on before, and he'd watch it for a while, doze off, wake up and watch some more."

I sigh and lean my arms on the rail of the bed. "Paula," I say quietly, and she looks at me across the room. "Sometimes when he looks this still I think well...you know what I think."

Paula pulls the covers off Harry's feet and glances at me. "See the color?"

They look pale, but nothing too shocking.

"They are basically a normal color. When they are turning a bluish purple, the circulation has shut off down there. And his eyes still have reflexes," she finished, pushing gently at his eyelid and nodding when he twitched.

I place my hand over Harry's, staring at the blue veins and loose skin. "I guess I'll put the shakes in the refrigerator, so he can rest now."

Paula nods to me and heads to the chair by his bed while I head to the door. I'm not sure what I want to do. My soap is on, but I don't feel like watching it today. Julia's out of town with her husband and my grandson, Kenny. They didn't want to go and leave me here alone with no one to call, but I told them to head to the beach like they'd planned, and not to worry. They've been here so much as it is, at least Julia has been here a lot. It'll do her and Ray good to get away. Kenny usually goes off by himself, so they'll have time to themselves. The last thing Harry would want is to mess things up between them. I think their marriage is strong, but every relationship needs quiet time. Harry and I argued, but we would blow off steam by ourselves, and then talk about it like reasonable, mature people. Well, most of the time. Early in our marriage we weren't so smart and basically shouted at each other during our first fight. I don't even know what we argued about anymore, but obviously we solved it and being young we had fun making up.

I decide it is kind of silly to stand in the middle of our living room, shaking my head and grinning over the memories. So I go across the room to Harry's chair, the recliner. This was where he would sit and read the newspaper or just talk to me across the room.

Sometimes I expect him to walk in the room and go over there. At night it is worse than daytime. It is all so quiet then, and the darkness seems to close in. It's the middle of a humid summer, and that darkness makes me feel so cold, like I've walked outside in snow without a coat. What's weird is, the cold feels good sometimes, because I'm numb and in a world where Harry isn't suffering. And then I start to think that I should feel something, and the coldness turns into my weakness, not my strength. But the night always passes, and although I'm still cold, morning brings light.

The phone rings, and I use the cordless beside me. It must be Julia, she said she would call to see how things were.

"Hello," I answer, and it's her. "Did you have a good trip down, honey?" She tells me about little things. They saw a cow and ducks on a farm they passed, Kenny's in the pool, she and Ray are going to take a walk after we finish talking. We talk about everything but Harry, and it feels wonderful. I feel guilty not wanting to think about my husband, but soon he won't even be in the bed upstairs, and I'll need myself more than ever then. Finally Julia asks, almost as if she is afraid to know.

"Your Dad's sleeping right now, and Paula said he had a good lunch when I want out to get milkshakes for us," I reassure her. I know she thinks she should stay over here at night with me, to help me when he calls and needs changing, but that's not fair to her. She tells me she loves me, and to give their love to Dad.

"Give my love to Ray and Kenny too, Julia, and don't worry," I repeat as we hang up. Paula leaves soon after that, telling me to make sure I eat a good dinner, that I need to take care of myself. I thanked her for her concern, but I'm still sitting here in this chair staring at a sitcom that makes no sense. Disgusted, I turn off the T.V. and take a book of poetry off the shelf to read to Harry. Armed with that, strained green beans and our milkshakes, I go to see Harry.

He is awake, but he stares at me with an empty gaze. Nevertheless, I smile and take his hand. He looks at the shakes on the night table, and his eyes light up some, a rare reward for me.

"You rest," he says, though the words are garbled. The congestion must be building up again. I press the blanket around his body and shake my head.

"Nope," I begin lightly, "First we are going to have some green beans, then for dessert our milkshakes, and then I thought maybe you'd like to hear some poetry."

So I feed him, like we fed Julia when she was a baby. He drinks most of the shake pretty good, but he's too tired to use the straw for the last quarter of it. Then I open the book of poetry, picking out poems I know he likes. I hold his hand and read, stop-



ping once to bathe his face. Before he falls asleep, I check his diaper and bed sore. The bed sores are okay, but the diaper isn't, so I change that and give him a little bath so he'll feel clean during the night. He's falling asleep, but I kiss him on the cheek anyway.

"You get a good rest, honey. Tomorrow the pastor is coming to see you." I press my face to his, wishing that he would wrap his arms around me. But he can't, so I whisper that I love him and remember when he could.

I go to my room. It doesn't feel like my room, but I guess it is now. I get ready for bed, and climb under the flowered sheets. Amazingly, I fall asleep for a while. Usually I lay here staring at the ceiling, and no matter how much I want to sleep I can't. The bell I leave in Harry's room for him to call me wakes me up, but even half asleep, it sounds different than usual. It is just a single ding, not many in rapid succession, and it is softer, so soft that I'm surprised I woke up from it. I guess I sleep lighter now. I glance at the clock, and it's three.

"I'm coming, Harry," I call as I go in his room. Flailing his arms, he is reaching for something, either that or fighting something off. For the first time I want to run away from everything, even my love for Harry, but that is impossible, so I go to him.

"It's blue, all blue, blue...the box, the box...blue box..." he rambles, and I stare at the covers he has somehow pushed on the floor. Even his diaper is off, so I wipe him up, and put a clean one on him.

And then I look at his face. His oxygen tube is out. I should have seen it when I came in, but I didn't. Not only that, but Harry's eyes are more terrified than I've ever seen them.

"Light...light...Turn off..." he cries, waving his hand towards the window. I turn off the lamp, and he still cries out. "No, no...I don't want the light...stop it."

I put the oxygen tube back into his nose and around his ears, damning myself because I wasn't sure if I wanted to.

"The light..." he says again, and I push down the rail, and climb in bed. His head falls against my breast, and I stroke his head as I would a child.

"It's okay, Harry," I murmur over and over. "I love you." Sometimes he jerks away suddenly, but I press him to me again. Until finally, he raises his hand to the window again.

"Light gone," he says, quiet now and his hand falls limply to the bed.

"Are you all right now," I ask, and he answers, nodding against me.

And I lay in the darkness, wishing that light would come back and swallow us both, until the tears roll down my own wrinkled

cheek, slipping to Harry's face. The sun will rise in a few hours, and I'll put on a brave face for the minister, but inside I will be dark and cold. I ease myself away from Harry, he's sleeping now, and go back to my bed, wondering how to feel warm. I curl up under the blanket even though it is the middle of summer, wondering if I'm cold now, how I will feel when winter comes.

*Kerri Habben*



*Jodi Pearce*

## Recipe

We are lifted from the darkness  
and placed on clouds  
to whisper thoughts of daydreams and feelings  
that evolve from the nothing  
that usually fills the minds of the people  
who wander down streets  
waiting for happiness to  
shower down on them like a  
waterfall of money which is probably  
the happiness they dream of  
when they don't realize  
that it takes more than money  
to make happiness;  
it is a long recipe.

*Lindsay Mize*



*Jodi Pearce*



## In the Wake of Death

On that particular Friday afternoon, I was in the back room of the veterinarian's office where the kennels were located. I was daydreaming about that night's plans while I filled shiny stainless steel bowls with moist, heaping scoops of canned Alpo dog food.

Suddenly, Dr. Beeson peeked through the doorway, snapping me out of my daydream and back into the reality of the pungent dog food. Because he couldn't be heard through the loud, incessant barking of the dogs, he motioned for me to follow him to the examining room. I placed the spoon I was using back into the can, wiped my greasy hands on my shorts, and obediently followed.

As I approached the examination room, I could see Dr. Beeson talking to an elderly man and woman who had their backs turned away from me. He was gesturing toward a dog that lay listlessly on the examining table. When I entered the room, the door creaked loudly and the couple turned toward me. For the first time, I saw the tears streaming down their wrinkled, weathered faces. Both of them gave me a sad glance before turning back to their dog. After several uncomfortably silent minutes, they nodded to Dr. Beeson and slowly walked out of the room, hand in hand. I instantly understood the situation. Their dog was to be put to sleep--forever.

After the grieving couple departed, Dr. Beeson quietly closed the door and pulled a large syringe from the drawer and placed it on the table beside the trembling dog. He then went into the adjacent room to search for a bottle of euthanasia solution. Alone in the room, I slowly walked to the chrome towel cabinet and pulled out a thick green and white striped towel. Apprehensively, I walked toward the dog and for the first time I got a better look at him. He was a large dog, although his once strong body was now emaciated and weak. His muted-yellow fur was coarse and matted. I shifted his body to place the towel beneath him. As I lifted him, he jerked his head around to see me. The second our eyes met, I knew that the task I was performing would be overwhelming. His sad eyes seemed to be crying, and my heart went out to him. I let my fingers sift through the coarse fur on his thin frame and he closed his eyes, happy and content. I felt his heart rhythmically beating as I gently stroked him. It was the last time he would ever feel happiness or pain. And I, an accomplice to his execution, would be one of the last people he would ever see.

I was on the verge of tears when I heard Dr. Beeson's footsteps approaching the table. I watched as he quickly filled the syringe with the euthanasia solution. While he wrapped a rubber tourniquet around the dog's front leg, I wiped my sweaty, shaking hands on my t-shirt. Then, to my dismay, Dr. Beeson asked me to

put my hand over the dog's heart so I could inform him when the pulse stopped. At that moment I wanted to flee from the office, away from the death and suffering. Instead, I followed his instructions precisely and put on a brave front. Knowing that I had no control over the situation, I watched as Dr. Beeson injected the deadly pink fluid into the dog's protruding leg. The dog languidly turned his head toward me. His eyes penetrated mine and seemed to be saying a thousand words.

Within thirty seconds his body began to tremble with seizures and I could feel his heartbeat become irregular. He began to cry softly, almost like a newborn baby. His heartbeat continued to slow down until finally his sorrowful eyes closed for the last time. My shaking hands dropped from the dog's lifeless body, and I was filled with grief at what I had just witnessed. Death had taken the life of one old dog, and with it, a corner of my heart.

*Ashley Prevatte*

## **Little Sister**

She used to play the piano at 9:15.

I was tucked in the top bunk behind the door.

*An Officer and a Gentlemen* was a favorite of ours.

"Who knows what tomorrow brings, in a world where few hearts survive?"

She'd sing and play on an occasional pass through the living room.

I remember those lullabies ten years ago.

I said goodbye to her the other day.

Off to the Keys with her husband of an hour.

This goodbye was different.

It didn't look different—the same stale hug and wave from the door.

No tears.

I came back in the house and was greeted by the now-out-of-tune piano.

I won't be in bed by 9:15 anymore.

*Becky Schaefer*



## Untitled

This fear  
That has  
Struck me  
Is also  
Fulfilling my  
Destiny  
While being  
Mortal here  
On this  
Gracious planet (someone named earth)  
I repent for  
My flesh-ful  
Sins  
My own  
Thoughts I  
Know not  
Whether to  
Repent—  
For surely I  
Didn't think  
Them of my  
Own  
Circular brain...

Wasn't there a  
Sensual beautiful  
Desire between  
Our PARENTS...  
One that the devil  
Turned to sin  
Our Parents were  
Erotic-----  
Erotic in their  
Sinless soul  
Till the Devil  
Told them it  
Was "naughty"

Our common mother  
Leaving all of us  
Feminine kind to be  
Whores  
And our common



*Alma Young*

Father  
 Who gave the  
 Masculine kind the  
 Right to say so—  
 For they burn not  
 In hell  
 Rather they burn in  
 Heaven  
 Watching us  
 Perform their  
 Erotic  
 Dreams  
 Crying to  
 Save us...

*Kim Starbuck*



### **What the Locket holds!**

Lucifer's locket, all made of gold  
 It holds my soul and feels as cold  
 As hand upon face  
 In your lifeless love  
 It is what no one can save me from  
 For deep within a slumber I swell  
 Reduced to ashes  
 bound for Hell

*Tina Motley*

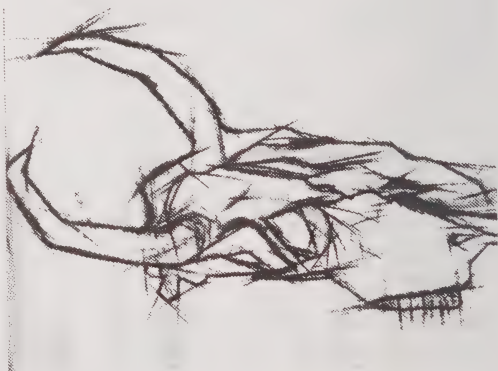
Lucifer's locket, all made of gold  
 It feels as empty, but holds my soul.

*Dana Ford*

## One Day Nobody Jumped Nowhere

One day  
the world came down on me  
while sleeping—  
soundly;  
a long lost friend paid a brief visit.  
He fought and struggled with my greater mind—  
until he,  
the one who had been pushed aside,  
overcome,  
overlooked,  
ultimately defeated me.  
And there he stood with a blank page—  
illustrating who was on my side.  
What was on my side?  
I couldn't account for anything.  
My mistakes everyone took credit for,  
seemed to have in bold print—  
my name—  
my name with laziness, deceitfulness,  
and no education,  
way too far behind to catch up.  
My friend was screaming at me—so loud—  
so loud I could not think.  
He took my hand.  
He led me to a place called "Nowhere".  
He told me I belonged there,  
he made me climb rocks,  
he knew he was in control now,  
he made me jump,  
or rather he pushed me,  
he didn't bother to wake me  
until I was almost there.  
I heard him laughing—  
wickedly—and then—  
nothing.

*Starla Gallimore*



*Jodi Pearce*



## let me go

*i'm drowning. panic overcomes me, leaving me no room to breathe. water, hot salty water, closes in faster and faster, turning my flesh red with its continuous burning. i can't find the surface. the water covers my face, trickling down my cheeks as it overflows my eyes. the salt i swallow swells my head and stings my wounded heart. i've got to stop — take control — find the surface... off in the distance there's a sharp ring. yes! move towards that ring! it grows louder and louder. quick, grab it before it stops! reach out your hand and grasp that sound!*

*"Hello?"*

*"Oh, Suzanne, we're so sorry. We just heard."  
stop — no! wrong number. let go. don't listen!*

*"Is there anything we can do for you?"  
nothing. leave me alone. let me drown. let me drown!*

*"No. Thanks anyway."*

*"Well, sweetie, you just let us know if we can do anything."  
did you not hear me? leave me alone! let me drown!*

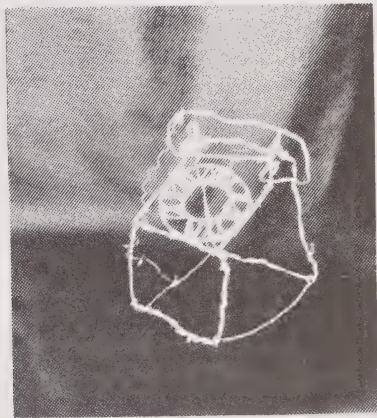
*"Okay."*

*"Good-bye, sweetie... And — take care."  
let go. what's wrong? just let go of the awful sound. it's a mistake.  
all a mistake. don't listen — drown.  
i feel the hot salty water surrounding me again. i want it to stop.  
why won't it stop? i feel so empty. take me away!  
please — let me go numb — sink — drown.  
i stopped sinking. where am i going? up? why am i going up? no!  
don't touch me. let me go! i don't want the surface. i don't like the  
voices... they lie! they all lie! why can't you just let me go? — leave  
me alone — let me drown...*

*"Why can't you just let me drown?"*

*"Because, Suzanne... we care..."*

*Suzanne York*



*Michelle Matheney*

## Jessi's Story

This past summer, I went on a mission trip with my church youth group to Williamsburg, Kentucky, for a week to build a home for the Rains family. The Rains — Glenn, Teressa, Jessi, and a baby on the way — lived in an old rundown trailer with little electricity and no running water. There were only two rooms the bedroom and the kitchen, and they had turned the bedroom closet which was as tiny as a bathroom stall, into a nursery for little Jessica (Jessi) and for the new baby.

Baby Jessi was born with every birth defect known to man and then some. But only on the inside it seemed. From the outside, she was a bright, energetic, and beautiful blonde, blue-eyed, perfect two-year-old. Anyone who would meet her would think that she was an angel with no problems. But that is far from true.

When Jessi was born, she had spinal meningitis. She also was born with no exterior openings for her to go to the bathroom, so she had to have a tiny colostomy bag strapped to her at all times. The doctors said she wouldn't live more than a week, but we were there to celebrate her second birthday in her new house.

The reason the house had to be built was that the trailer did not have all the necessities Jessi needed, such as running water. They had a well in the backyard, which Glenn had dug himself, and an outhouse in the woods to go to the bathroom. So the Department of Child Welfare was going to put her in a foster home if they didn't get the necessities by the end of the summer.

Jessi was always in the hospital in Lexington, it seems, and being around so many doctors made her shy around people. But the one thing she loved more than anything was cameras. She would be screaming and crying, but would stop the second anyone pulled out a camera. She would then stop, wave, and smile until the person put the camera up. The one time the whole trip we saw her smile without a camera was when she got a tour of her new home.

Jessi was healthy all week, with the exception of a tiny cold. But by Friday, the cold had gotten worse and everything went wrong! She wouldn't eat, drink, cry, or sleep. She was running a fever of over a hundred degrees, and she was constantly throwing up. But they couldn't get Jessi to the hospital the one car they had was in the garage being fixed. They didn't have the money to pay for it, and Glenn couldn't get to work without it, so he lost pay.

Scared as we all were that this would be the end for little Jessi, who had captured the hearts of all, including our own Ebenezer Scrooge, we stopped our work and said a prayer. In the middle of our prayer, Jessi's bag started to leak and dribbled down her mother's shirt. That's when we noticed the blood.

We got so scared, we took the church bus and rushed to the hospital in Lexington. It was an hour-and-a-half drive away, and the youth group had to stay to do the finishing touches on the house. When we were done, the bus still had not returned, so we had to get the Outreach group from the college that we were staying at and who sponsored us, to come and get us. By ten o'clock that night, the bus and our chaperones still had not returned. But we were for the most part too worried to party, and there was still no word on Jessi's condition.

We left the Rains' house that day knowing that that was probably the last time we would see Jessi. But Saturday afternoon at our picnic before we left, we heard the familiar cry in the distance. All turned to see little Jessica running toward us. Jessi had spent the night in the Emergency Room and Glenn's boss had picked the family up that morning from the hospital to bring them to the picnic. They had come to say good-bye.

We decided to get a few more shots of Jessi with the camera hanging out with the kids who would give up a week of their summer to build a house for someone they didn't know. As we were watching the videos that I had taken during the past week, we saw the last shot we won't forget. Jessi saying her first words: "Fank thu!"

*Jennifer Thrailkill*



## The Winter of a Plastic Pink Flamingo In My Front Yard

Beyond the window is the wind,  
Crinkling leaves like aging skin.  
Creating a whirlwind of earth and life  
on your cheek like a cold steel knife.  
Still you sit there, still you wait  
even though the frost is great.  
Your warmth is thinking spring is near,  
that the sun will shine and other birds will appear.  
While you sit there and the wind blows,  
I'll come break the icicles that hang from your nose.

*Lindsay Mize*



*Hidemi Itoch*

## Untitled

I've been  
Pregnant  
Once  
I've been  
Pregnant  
Twice  
Maybe  
Three  
Times  
Full in the  
Belly  
With those  
Stagnant  
Pregnant  
Thoughts  
To abort  
My Life  
Cold and  
Alone  
Maybe I left  
My life for  
A reason  
But we both  
Bleed on  
The same  
Day  
The same  
Amount of shame  
Like a  
Flowing  
Long  
Black  
River of  
Blood  
It did pour...  
Solid streams  
Christening  
The pure  
Water  
Dropping  
Dripping  
Slowly

From these  
Bowels  
They call a  
Uterus  
A dome...  
A womb...  
To bleed  
And bleed  
Days...Months...  
At a time  
We both bleed  
It fell from  
Our  
Being  
All of it  
Our heart  
Mind  
Body  
Soul  
Fell  
With the  
Exception of  
God  
As a  
Thought...

*Kim Starbuck*



*Tina Motley*

# I

I  
am a doormat.  
You  
tread on me but you do not  
realize the friction you cause.  
I  
am a stool.  
Used  
by you to reach the things you want,  
but usually stashed in a corner  
or a closet.  
I  
am a screen door,  
that  
has been slammed too many times.  
I can't close on my own now.  
I  
am here.  
Although  
you use me for your selfish reasons  
you do not recognize me for what I am.  
A person  
who is made to feel:  
like a doormat,  
like a stool,  
like a screen door,  
But  
who can  
Feel.

*Lindsay Mize*



*Alma Young*



## The Mystery of the Creator—The Uncovered Wonders

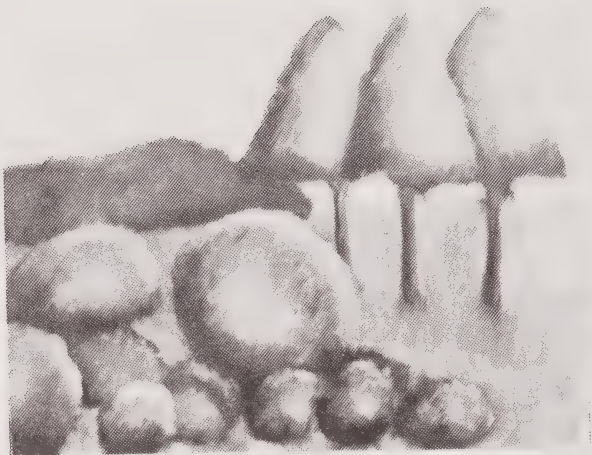
Today, as the brisk wind nips at my nose, I decide to walk through the pasture behind my house. It is early and the sun has not yet risen out of the east. I gaze at the sky, wondering, as I look at the stars, if there is any other life. Then I see a shooting star pass before my eyes—“I wish I may, I wish I might, wish upon this shooting star tonight”—well it’s not night but... This shooting star has a special meaning to me; not only is it the first shooting star I’ve seen, but it makes me realize how small I am in the vast existence of things.

As the sun is starting to rise, the sky looks like a Halloween decoration; the background is black with orange and yellow and red splashed all over it. With the beautiful array of colors come many questions. And then the new light shining on everything catches my attention. The grass glistens with thousands of tiny ice crystals as a lean rabbit leaps out of sight. “Oh, I thought I was all alone,” I say as I bend down only to see more. In front of my eyes many thousand ants work to get in the last food before the big freeze.

Approaching the woods, I stop as two big cows run by me. As I turn around to watch them leave, I wonder about all of the activity so early in the morning—When do the animals sleep!

Now, I finally reach my destination, that old flat white-flint rock by the creek that so many times I have come to just be alone with nature. Sitting down I look at the creek, which to my surprise is dry. The water splashing over the rocks through the woods is a familiar sound of the creek in front of me. While enjoying the peace of the rushing waters, my thoughts are interrupted by the rustling of leaves. As I rake the leaves away, a large toad-frog jumps from its burrow in the damp clay. With the frog hopping away, I bend down and pick up some of the moist earth. The burnt-orange-colored clay oozes as I mash it between my fingers, revealing vast shades of orange color.

Next to the clay is a large pile of leaves. The top layer of the leaves is freshly fallen and displays brilliant fall colors of orange and yellow and red. Down lower in the stack are the brown skeletons of earlier fallen leaves. As I sit on my rock, I become more aware of the intense structure of things around me. The leaf, seemingly a simple structure, has an immense frame much like that of the human body. The wonders of the leaf’s structure sends me after the larger creator of it, the tree. Up above towers a maple with a stout body and many arms swaying with the rhythm of the chilling wind. This tree is the creator of this leaf, but who or what is the creator of the tree and me?



*Brooke Thompson*

## Serenade

For anyone to listen —  
 the music of my words  
 like the music of my voice  
 floats in a melismatic line  
 the key of the composition  
 uncomplicated at first  
     but rapidly modulating  
 at every phrase  
 The phrases ascend in harmonious happiness  
 too quickly,  
     making the long, descending tones  
     bittersweet to the palate of your tender ears  
 My life, like my music  
     sadly too short  
 the despair of Mozart's Requiem  
     multiplied 1000 times  
     in my grave tune  
 Should no one listen —  
     I'll serenade my earth friends forever  
 But should one living soul hear my song,  
     I may be forever entangled in the vines of his mind.



*Hidemi Itoch*

*Dana Ford*

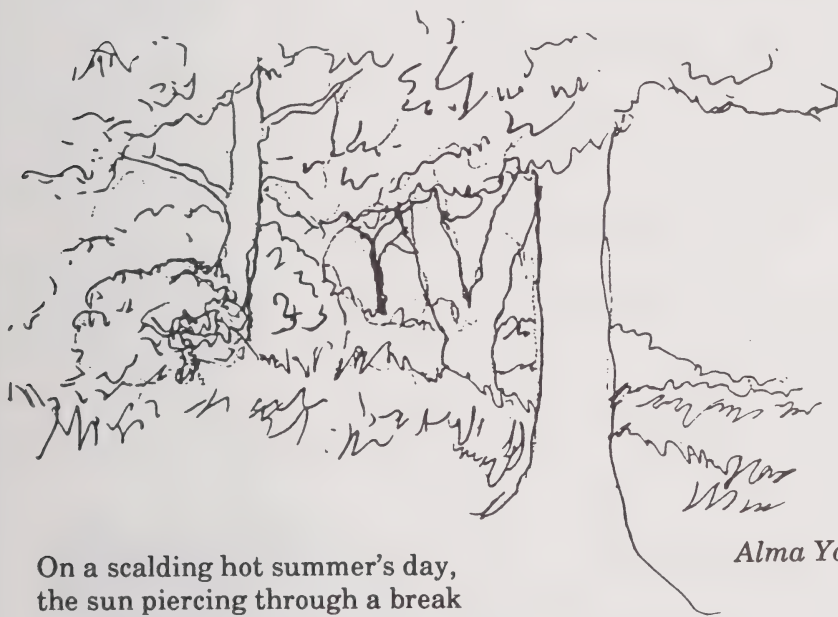
## Seasons Change

On cool winter days between noon and dusk,  
while the clouds make friendly gestures,  
and the sun smiles so brightly,  
we skip down gentle curves to Our Spot.  
We are warmly greeted each time!

The giant oak generously rolls out a seat,  
even the ground blushes when we speak!  
The weeping willow whirls with the wind  
making its tips dance on our heads.

We tease, we talk, we touch,  
to the music of the trickling river below us.  
Suddenly the moon replaces the sun.

—The day was too short.



*Alma Young*

On a scalding hot summer's day,  
the sun piercing through a break  
in the jumbled clouds,  
I stroll through the woods to a deserted spot  
with blood-red mud,  
murky water,  
and drooping trees.  
I sit on an old lumpy overgrown root.  
I think, I cry, I ask,  
When will tomorrow come?

—This day is too long.

*Starla Gallimore*



## Life needs seatbelts.

Life needs seatbelts.

Too many potholes,

Sharp curves,

Hills.

One way streets

that appear to have no end

until an opening appears

from the shadows

and you barely have time to turn.

Life needs straps to cling to.

Life moves too fast

with too much traffic

and

confusion

but only one

STOP sign.

*Lindsay Mize*



*Alma Young*

## If I Am Gone Tomorrow...

If I am gone tomorrow,  
Do not weep or cry,  
For today we shared a smile — a laugh — a breath —  
The world is a good place.

If I am gone tomorrow,  
Think not of yesterday,  
For I am with my father  
Only he knows my future.

If I am gone tomorrow,  
Use my heart and mind,  
Take time with others  
Do not forget our race against time.

If I am gone tomorrow,  
Weep not—  
I am now in a better home  
My father's loving paradise.

If I am gone tomorrow,  
Thank God for today,  
My place on earth not forgotten  
But remembered only truly in heaven.

In Memory of Trip Parham  
December 7, 1992

*Lynn May*

## Nature's Struggle

An inferno of colors,  
Orange, red, yellow, rust,  
Consuming all in its rampant path.  
Stifled and suffocated,  
Every tree stripped,  
But the proud evergreen.  
Birds flee,  
Squirrels desperately hoard  
All that they can find.  
Each color leaps from the blaze,  
Lulling bears and beavers  
Into a long comatose sleep.  
This is Nature's last effort.  
A vain struggle to beat death,  
But as the colors fall,  
As the inferno rages,  
It wears itself out,  
Covering all,  
Only to be covered in turn  
By a soft death shroud of white.

*Heather Snapp*



*Tina Motley*



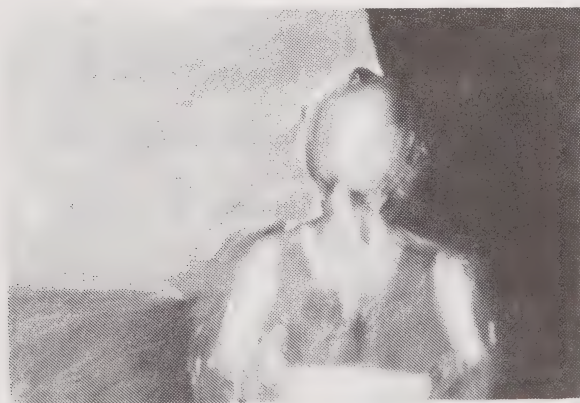
## So ever long ago

I stare into deep eyes, that made me mad,  
So ever long ago.

Remnants of a bittersweet love story  
that changed my course of history forever.  
Our past,  
is a dangerous field to cross.  
Minds so strong,  
maybe too good to last.

Ah, the mistakes of foolish youth,  
Causing the making or breaking of tender souls.  
Reality treading upon the climax blooming  
of fresh-faced innocence, staring it face down,  
and taking it beyond previously denied paths.  
Just to push it into grown-up existence,  
because of society's inert expectations.  
With the awakened body and mind,  
a new understanding of what was explained  
comes forth.  
Wanting the knowledge to carry thyself back  
to the time, when one can look back and yearn  
for that innocence, that was given up,  
so ever long ago.

*Kari Ward*



*Heather Leinenweber*

## The Weaver's Song

1.

I am the keeper of a rug of many colors;  
A rug full of brilliant emotions,  
Day after day is spent weaving the intricate fibers,  
Nourishing them with my experiences.

I am not always the person you perceive me to be,  
complexity dwells deep in my soul;  
I adeptly guard my emotions from the outside world,  
For my rug of colors is sacred,  
Not to be unraveled by strangers.

2.

My sadness washed over me in waves of blue,  
The tide is perpetually in, its waves lapping my heart;  
It never washes my despair back to sea.

I cry over brutality,  
There seems to be no good in this world.

I cry over a broken heart,  
There seems to be no hope in this world.

I cry over lost dreams,  
There seems to be no love in the world.

Loneliness dominates my life;  
My attempts to seek pleasure are futile.

Tears trickle down the mask I call my face in icy streaks  
of sadness;  
I am drowning in my withdrawn world.

3.

My anger shoots forth in bursts of red,  
Crimson fireworks exploding loudly within my body;  
I am tortured with devilish thoughts,  
Painful, dangerous feelings.

My hatred is vicious and spiteful,  
My wrath contains evil, savage plots,  
My words draw blood in their prey.

My temper is not under control,  
It is a malicious beast waiting to kill;  
I relish the misery that my temper causes.

4.

My happiness glides over me in warm yellow rays;  
My heart sings praise to the sunny day,  
It serenades all of mankind.

I hear the laughing children frolicking on the playground;  
The sky above is clear and luminous,  
The earth smells fresh and pure.

I receive smiles from strangers,  
I receive love from friends.

My golden skin can't possibly contain the cheerfulness inside my  
body;  
It radiates through my pores, to be shared with the world.

5.

My rug's colors are already chosen,  
They are complete;  
But I spend my days weaving the colors among each other,  
Extending my rug into an immense masterpiece,  
To be admired and treasured forever.

*Ashley Prevatte*



*Jill Crawford*



## B.J.K.

The Colonel came back from Korea, ya know, just to be there.  
He was there, me, him and my brother to take my mom to the  
hospital

She just had some tests done the first time

The second, we took her to stay.

The doctor told us it would be simple, no complications.

Before — her vibrance, her beauty. (Someday I want to have her  
name tattooed on my ankle.)

I remember going in afterwards...it was so hard.

She was bloated — She didn't look herself, machines

Everywhere.

She wrote me a note one day (she couldn't speak because of the  
tubes).

I said "Ma, what the hell is this? Ya know I can't read  
chicken scratch!", joking — like I always do, or did, with her.

She later told me what it said

That night, I saw my father through the window of the door,  
sitting beside my mother, crying and whispering  
and gently, softly, stroking her hair.

Something I'd never seen before.

(I'd never see it happen again.)

We brought her home, me, the Colonel, and my brother and that  
night she got so sick.

I was the only one she wanted to comfort her. If I left her  
bedside, she cried like a starving infant.

The Colonel stayed an extra week for her...

That morning at 5:00 a.m. I clamored to the door, wandering  
to work

Ma was sitting in the corner of the room, in pain

I walked over to her and hugged her as gently as I could  
without crying (strength).

"Ma, I love you, ya know that."

Then she left

and I never saw her again.

Then the Colonel left for Korea.

*Dana Ford*



*Jodi Pearce*

## YOU'RE THE ANGEL

We both fell

from the same cliff,

But like always,

my wound was more painful.

We have

both

stabbed using the same knife,

lied that same lie,

and cried the same tears.

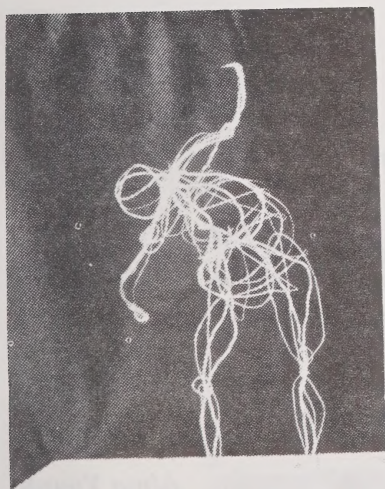
And somehow,

my blade was deeper,

my lie was harsher,

and my cry was never heard.

*Carolyn Davis*



*Alma Young*

## Progressions of the Sunset

Atmosphere thickening like orange Jello  
Congealing, crystallizing  
Into hard sugar balls.

Red hot, like a tamale on your tongue,  
Like a celebration  
With sparklers  
And flags of blue and white.

Cotton candy clouds at the carnival.  
Sickening swirls of light from  
The Wheel of Death.

Candy-apples melting into emerald grass,  
Sticky masses dropped  
By cherub children.

Slippery bodies,  
Indifferent to the sweaty heat,  
As they descend  
Behind mountains in Egypt.

Lavender silk caresses the dancers' legs,  
Writhing around their naked thighs.  
Bleached like hundred-year-old drift-wood.

Deep purple beads click against an Indian's wrists,  
a black hush surrounds the crowd,  
spangled horses circle and dance,  
And the gypsy fortune-teller  
Lets fall her inky, transparent veil.

*Heather Snapp*



*Alma Young*





